

Coins

Questions about value keep pace with the steady surge of silver

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE the answers to some often-asked questions about silver coins:

Q — We have a cigar box full of old United States coins. How can we tell for sure which ones contain silver? — A.M., Palatine.

A — Simply check the dates. Each dime, quarter, and half-dollar minted before 1965 contains 90 per cent silver, 10 per cent copper. For every \$1 face value of those coins, you have nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of pure silver.

You might also find other silver gems buried in the box. Here's what else to look for:

- Half-dollars dated from 1965 to 1970. They were made with 40 per cent silver and 60 per cent copper, and two of them contain slightly more than a quarter of an ounce of silver.

- Most nickels made from 1942 to 1945. Silver was used in those coins because nickel was needed in World War II.

- Silver dollars minted before 1936.

Each coin has more than $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of silver. (The Susan B. Anthony dollar coins do not contain silver; neither do the "Eisenhower dollars" made for circulation during the 1970s.)

Q — We'd like to cash in nearly \$50 worth of silver quarters that my family took out of circulation 10 years ago. What will coin dealers pay for them? — K.D., Chicago.

A — It depends on the price of silver on the day you sell. If silver is \$32 an ounce, for example, you might get \$20 for each \$1 of silver quarters (remember, four silver quarters contain almost $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce of silver).

You should call several dealers before selling, since not all dealers pay the same. And check the dates, mint marks, and condition of your coins, as some of them might be worth even more as "collector items."

Questions about coins or collecting? Send them to Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.